

In their respective fields, each was a titan. Individually, they rank as among the five all-time greatest legends in lyricism and musicdom respectively.

Majrooh Sultanpuri and Laxmikant-Pyarelal (Pyarelal) were, to so many, the poet and the maestro(s) in Hindi film music. Considering their individual prolific records (250-plus and 550-plus films respectively), their total tally stands at a rather low 40. Quite naturally, Majrooh was known for his R.D. Burman connection, and L-P for their *rishta* with Anand Bakshi. In life and in death, however, the *shaayar* from Sultanpur and the musical genius extraordinary (with partner Pyarelal) shared a unique relationship. Laxmikant died on May 25, 1998, while Majrooh passed away last year on May 24. Laxmikant-Pyarelal's meteoric rise to fame (despite a smash debut in *Parasmani*) really began with Majrooh's *Dosti*, and years later, Majrooh was to rate L-P's *Jal Bin Macchli Nritya Bin Bijli* as one of his two (the other being *Mamta*) all-time best works in his 55-year career.

Incidentally, this V. Shantaram film was the first-ever Hindi film score (and Indian gramophone record) to be recorded in stereophonic sound. Majrooh loved to recall how Laxmikant and Pyarelal got *Dosti* and began their long affair d'amor with success. "After the hit score of *Aarti*," remembered the veteran, "the Rajshri Productions banner wanted to repeat *Roshansaab* and me for this film, and arranged a special screening of the original Bengali film on which it was based. *Roshansaab* termed the film the story of a blind beggar and turned it down. Laxmi and Pyare were then barely a couple of films old as composers. Tarachand Barjatya signed them and to be frank, I was hesitant about working with these newcomers, and happened to mention this to the late Chitragupta at a recording. Chitraguptasab immediately told me that I need not be apprehensive, and that they were phenomenally talented boys, as he had worked with him as musicians."

In one of the many interviews I was to do with the Phalke-winning lyricist, Majrooh went on record to tell me, "Laxmikant-Pyarelal, like Roshan and very few other composers, always gave me complete creative freedom, as they tuned most of my songs after I wrote the words. Pancham, Nayyarsab and Dada Burman would often want certain words and phrases simplified. Laxmi-Pyare formed a team with Anand Bakshi only after they began to go more commercial."

Quite naturally then, the best of Majrooh-L-P is found in the earlier part of his career, as even Majrooh went largely



Majrooh Sultanpuri

the Pancham way after RD hit it big in the early '70s. If the all-hit score of *Dosti* boasted of perennials like Lata's *Gudiya humse roothi rahogi* and five Rafi gems - *Chahoonga main tujhe*, *Jaanewalo zaraa*, *Teri dosti mera pyar*, *Mera to jo bhi qadam hai* and *Raahi manwaa*. *Jal Bin...* had fabulous exotica like Lata's *Man ki pyaas mere man se na nikli*, *O mitwaa*, *Kajraa lagaake* and *Jo main chali phir na miloongi*, Mukesh's *Taaron mein sajke* and Lata-Mukesh's *Jhoom ke gaaye dil* and *Baat hai ek boond si dil ke pyaale mein*.

If *Dosti* remains a trendsetting hit, *Jal Bin...* remains a monumental milestone in musical excellence. But the Majrooh-L-P record has many more arrows in its creative quiver. It was for *Wapas* that the team won its second joint award - the Sur-Singar Samsad award for the Best Classical Film song - for *Painjaniya chhanke Ram*. *Wapas* also had the evergreen *Ek tera saath* (Lata-Rafi) and *Ayee baharon ki shaam* (Rafi). *Meri Bhutbi* with its sublime Lata melody *Pawan jhakora sang mere gaaye*, *Pyasi Sham* with Lata's *Duniya mein dilwale honge hazaaron* and the title song, *Anokhi Ada* with Kishore's *gawwali*, *Haal kya hai dilon ka*, *Anari* (Kishore-Asha's *Hamein kya garaz* and Kishore's *Tere baghair jaane jaana*), *Barkha Bahar* (Mahendra Kapoor-Manhar's *O door se aanewale bataa*) and *Mere Sajana* with

Kishore's haunting *Maine kuchh khoya hai*, dholak-based numbers like Lata-Rafi's *Tere sang jeena* and Rafi's rural tango, *O dil janiya* were among other Majrooh-L-P lovelies.

Even in the final phase of their association, when they were not exactly com-

fortable with each other, they still came out with nuggets like Mohd. Aziz-Anuradha's *Barkha rut bhi aaj ajab mastani hai* and Alka's *Mera baalaa ulajh gaya baalon mein* (*Janam Janam*/1988), *Jab pyaar kiya* (Aziz-Anuradha in *Watan Ke Rakhwale*/1987) and Rafi-Lata's *Do chahanewaalon ki mulaqaat* (*Ladies Tailor*/1981), but the tuning had gone.

*Mastan Dada*, *Jaanwar* (1983), *Pakhandee*, *Khoon Aur Pani* and their last three films *Rishta Ho To Aisa*, *Humshakal* (1992) and *Badi Bahen* were singularly bereft of the free-flowing amalgam of poetry, intense melody and commercial appeal that marked major Majrooh-L-P triumphs like *Mere Hamdam Mere Dost*, *Shagird*, *Patthar Ke Sanam*, *Dharti Kahe Pukar Ke*, *Abhinetri*, *Ek Nazar*, *Imtihaan* and the very commercial *Dus Numbri* and *Parvarish*.

Mention must be also made of the one score that stands out as one of the most luminous - if low-key - Majrooh-L-P gifts to music buffs: the exquisite Lata-dominated *Baharon Ki Manzil* with its haunting *Nigahen kyon bhatakti hai*, the saccharine *Janam din aaya*, the poignant *Yeh daaman ab na chhutege* and that magnificent Farida Jalal dance number *Aaja re piya khilne lage*



Laxmikant-Pyarelal

*tan man ke phool* which ranks among L-P's most novel compositions. Extremely popular in those days, this score has gone into oblivion due to the sheer negligence on the part of those concerned.

Majrooh's forte was his vast range, and L-P's versatility needs no endorsement. Together they spun a magical web that encompassed an awe-inspiring range from the very rural *Je hum tum chori se* (*Dharti Kahe Pukar Ke*) to the guitar-based ooh-la-la strains of *Roz shaam aati thi* and *Ruk jaana nahin* (*Imtihaan*), and from the poetic heights of *Hui shaam unka khayal* (*Mere Humdum Mere Dost*) to fun numbers like *Sa re ga ma pa* (*Abhinetri*) and *Bade miyan diwane* (*Shagird*).

Especially worth-cherishing, because for the raw deal they got vis-a-vis the other hits from the same films, were songs like *Kaanha Kaanha* (Lata/Shagird), *Koi nahin hai phir bhi hai mujhko* (Lata/Patthar Ke Sanam), *O ghataa sanwari* (Lata/Abhinetri), *Khushi ki who raat aa gayi* (Mukesh/Dharti Kahe Pukar Ke), *Khuli nazar kya khel* (Kishore-Amit/Parvarish) and *Dekho idhar bhi* (Asha-Usha/Imtihaan). Truly, theirs was *Ek Rishta - a bond of excellence*.